

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ZAGREB 002083

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE KABUMOTO, MITCHELL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: Minority Agreement Formalizes Protections

Ref: (1) Zagreb 2103 (2) Belgrade 2482

Summary and Comment

1. (SBU) During his historic visit to Belgrade on 15 November (Refs), PM Sanader and SAM PM Tadic signed an agreement on the protection of minorities in the two countries. Focused on the ethnic Croat and ethnic Serb minorities in each country, the agreement does not set out new protections, but rather confirms the legal rights of the two minority groups and establishes a commission to monitor progress and implementation. The third such bilateral minority agreement for Croatia, its significance is largely symbolic in establishing a technical framework for protection and discussion of minority issues. End Summary and Comment.

2. (SBU) Ethnic Serb party MP Milorad Pupovac told us he was generally pleased with the agreement, and fought successfully with the MFA for the inclusion of several provisions: references to refugee issues, the composition of the implementing commission, and 'acquired rights' - referring to legal minority rights of ethnic Serbs which he believes are key. He remains most interested in ensuring the right to use minority languages and promoting the activities of the National Minority Council in Croatia. Regarding the PM's visit to Belgrade, Pupovac was disappointed that the PM declined to visit the ethnic Serb refugee committee along side his visits with the Croat community and the Catholic Church. The agreement also formally allows the GOC to support ethnic Croats in SAM, he noted. Some ethnic Serb refugee groups, Pupovac said, criticized SAM for not pushing the missing persons issue more during negotiations.

3. (SBU) According to Dunja Jevak, South East European Director at the MFA, the agreement contains no new elements but provides a standard for both countries. The GOC is ahead of SAM in terms of minority representation and treatment, Jevak stated, and this agreement helps move SAM in the right direction. Jevak admitted the Ministry's initial resistance to provisions pushed by the SDSS but agreed after recognizing that refugee issues were germane to the agreement and that no additional protections were involved.

4. (U) The agreement offers similar protections as under the Constitution, including the right to education and public use of minority script (the parties agreed to special legislation on this point and on curriculum issues). It pledges to support employment of minority members in education and to promote the availability of educational centers and media programs for minorities. In addition, the commitment to minority participation in local, regional and national government was confirmed, as was the protection of minority rights. Unlike Croatia's other minority agreements, it establishes a joint committee to monitor implementation to be selected by Croatia's National Minority Council. Minority agreements were previously signed with Italy and Hungary.

NNNN